



# State of New York County of Broome Government Offices

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Office of the Broome County Executive  
Jason T. Garnar, Executive

**EMBARGOED** until 6PM on September 12, 2018

## **2019 Executive Budget Address**

Good evening and thank you.

Thank you to Jennifer Conway, President and CEO of the Greater Binghamton Chamber of Commerce, for the introduction.

Tonight, I present my 2019 budget address. What you will hear tonight includes; the impact on your taxes, increased investment in Public Safety, and new Workforce Development programs. Why are we in Conklin at the DICK'S Sporting Goods Distribution Center? Workforce development and jobs. DICK'S has invested millions in Broome County. This is a local family-run business which cares about this community and wants to see it grow. I was here for the ribbon cutting earlier this year. This place is incredible. There are hundreds of people already working here. There will be hundreds more with the addition of more jobs in the next few years. Our Office of Employment and Training has been partnering with DICK'S to get those jobs filled. I look forward to more of these workforce development partnerships. Tonight, I will be introducing several brand-new workforce development programs in my 2019 budget.

First though, please join me in extending a big thank you to Dick's Sporting Goods for hosting us this evening at the Conklin Distribution Center and bringing jobs and opportunity to Broome County. All of us are here tonight to hear my 2019 budget plan. This is my second budget process and budget address as County Executive. The County budget isn't something that is drafted overnight, especially one that is \$385 million dollars.

On your property tax bill, your county taxes represent a small amount of property taxes that you pay, approximately 11 percent. That 11 percent funds a lot. That money goes a long way. Over 300 miles of roadway are maintained in Broome County. We have nearly half a million calls to 911 at the dispatch center every year. There are 50-thousand alumni of the college we support, SUNY Broome Community College. We take in 250,000 tons of garbage at the Broome County Landfill every year. 2.2 million rides are taken every year through our public transportation system. Broome County sponsors major events such as LUMA, the Dicks Sporting Goods Open, Spiedie Fest. We protect and enhance your health. 42 different county departments provide services or support those that do. The biggest county departments include Social Services, Sheriff and Public Works. The county provides major services that touch every single taxpayer in one way or another. The 11% of your property tax bill that I am responsible for provides a significant bang for your buck.

I've talked a lot this year about Building a Better Broome. We are rebuilding our finances and that shows with my 2019 budget. This year, S&P reaffirmed our A+ bond rating. The county fund balance is being replenished, from a dangerously low quarter of a million dollars at the end

of 2016 to over \$4 million just one year later. This fund balance is critical. It is our security. We are turning our finances around. It is getting a lot better. For four straight years, Broome County has ranked one of most fiscally stressed counties in New York. We will get off that list. The work that we have done last year, and this year will get us there. Responsible budgeting will get us there. My 2019 proposed budget is realistic, fiscally conservative, and it's strong.

As I said earlier, a county budget isn't drafted overnight. It requires funding necessary services with available resources. This year, I faced new legislation such as Raise the Age and Centralized Arraignment which greatly impact our costs. These and all of our costs have been matched to resources available to us. Those resources have been realistically estimated. And I am happy to announce the result, a tax cut with no gimmicks. Broome County taxpayers, I am proposing a reduction of half a percent in the property tax rate. It has been years since an Executive proposed a tax cut. It has been years since a County Executive proposed a tax cut. For the first time in 14 years, a County Executive stands before you presenting a budget proposal that includes a tax cut. We are moving in a positive direction. Let's stay the course. My budget for 2019 lessens the burden on Broome County taxpayers, helps enhance the business environmental and maintains critical county services and programs. Everything you come to expect from Broome County, it is funded in my plan for next year.

My administration has worked diligently to increase efficiency and minimize costs. Another way local costs have been kept down is by successfully applying for grants. Some examples: \$3 million dollars annually for the drug treatment center, Helio Health at the former Broome Developmental Center. SAM grants for the Forum, Arena, En-Joie, DPW- secured through Senator Akshar and Assemblywoman Lupardo. State funding will relieve our costs for Raise the Age. Bus grants for transit from the state and federal government. All of this assistance has helped Broome County to bring valuable service and programs to our residents. In 2019, I am committed to working with our municipalities. For years, the county unfairly took millions in sales tax revenue from our towns and villages. In 2019, I am not changing the sales tax formula. Several of our towns and villages leaders are with us tonight. We're all working together on shared services. Just three weeks ago, I was in Conklin and Kirkwood working with Bill and Gordie in response to the flash flooding. My administration has been to the towns and villages to deliver my budget address and my State of the County and that commitment continues this year.

Also, I want to announce that returning in 2019 is my Small Communities Grant Fund for \$150,000. This year, so far, we have made a real difference in the Village of Windsor, Village of Deposit, Town of Maine, Town of Fenton, and Town of Conklin. We are supporting kids and families with the Fenton Free Library and knocking down an old chimney in Deposit, making way for a brand-new community park. This grant fund is through Hotel-Motel fund. The businesses who are attracting these visitors to Broome County, who are spending their money here should be eligible to get this money.

In 2019, I will be re-working the application to open it up to businesses who bring tourism to our county. One of the projects I funded through the Small Communities Grant Fund this year is for emergency responders in Eastern Broome County. Eastern Broome EMS is helping save lives in Windsor, Deposit and Sanford. Emergency Response and Public Safety is top priority. It's a major part of my budget and the increase in investment is a no-brainer. Six State of Emergencies

have been declared since I took office. There have been historic snowstorms, dangerous flash flooding, train derailments just over the county border. We have to be prepared for emergencies and be ready to respond. We need one person dedicated to making sure that happens. In my 2019 budget, I am funding an Emergency Management Coordinator. This person will develop our action plans, train our first responders and be our first call when the next emergency happens.

With the flash flooding last month, there were 500 calls to dispatch. Our dispatchers have asked for help and they need it. In 2019, I am funding two more Emergency Dispatchers. Our public safety radio equipment is in desperate need of upgrade. Some of this equipment is from the 1960's. This is a major problem. In 2019, I am committed to working with the Legislature and our state partners to identify a sustainable funding source for this important public safety project.

The Office of Emergency Services, the Sheriff, the DA, Public Defender, Security - All these departments should be applauded for they do to protect our community. Many of them are working together on Raise the Age. This will start next month. It's a major impact on my 2019 budget. A lot of the growth in the departments you will see is because of it. 15 county positions are dedicated to Raise the Age. Raise the Age is a mandate from New York State. Eventually, 16 and 17-year-olds cannot be held in the county jails. Broome County has been on the forefront of Raise the Age. We were one of the first counties in New York get our plan approved. Our positions are reimbursed by the state so it's critical that we did this the right way.

Another big investment in public safety is Centralized Arraignment. We are adding Four Corrections Officers to the Sheriff's Office. This is going to let police officers drop off people they arrest and get back to work. Sometimes officers have had to drive across the county to the court and stay there for hours until a judge is available. Now, we will have Corrections Officers to watch these defendants. This will be good for everyone. Our police officers will no longer have to sit and wait. They will be able to drop-off the defendant and get back to patrolling our communities, protecting our residents.

I am also investing more in the District Attorney's Office. I am funding a new Senior Assistant District Attorney and a new Assistant District Attorney to meet the demand of the caseloads and the new programs in the DA's Office.

A few months ago, the DA announced that for the first half of this year, drug overdose deaths in Broome County are down by two-thirds from last year. This is a dramatic decrease. Everyone is working together to get that number down: our dedicated treatment providers, law enforcement officers, first responders, the groundbreaking Peer Response Team, grassroots organizations, everyone. I am committed to continue to help our grassroots organization fight this epidemic. We just awarded \$25,000 in mini-grants to Truth Pharm, Southern Tier AIDS Program, Boys and Girls Club and BOCES. Next year, another \$25,000 is in my budget for grassroots organization. I'm also continuing to fund the Health Department's Opioid Overdose Prevention Coordinator. She's getting county employees trained on how to use NARCAN and working with the peer response team to get boots on the ground to help those at risk of overdosing.

Tonight, I am here to announce that more help is on the way thanks to the hard work of Senator Akshar for a first of its kind Medically Assisted Treatment program at the Broome County Jail. At least two-thirds of jail inmates suffer from substance abuse addiction. It's time to get the treatment they need so when they get out of jail they have a chance to live a life of recovery. We expect to pick a provider and start the program very soon. I want to thank Sheriff Harder and Senator Akshar for all of their work to put this treatment program in motion.

Tonight, I am proud to announce several other new programs for 2019 centered around jobs and workforce development. I've said it many times this year, I believe one of the biggest challenges we face over the next 5 years is Workforce Development. I meet with a business every week and nearly all of them tell me of their struggles with finding people to work. We have 4,000 open jobs in Broome County. 4,000 open jobs that need to be filled. How do we help and train the people who live here to get those jobs? How do we attract people to this community?

There are several new programs in my 2019 budget for workforce development. I am expanding the Opportunity Impact Program, which was created this year by Sara Liu, our Employment and Training Director. It was a pilot program and a huge success. Enroll in the program, finish it and you are guaranteed a job. 20 people graduated this year, and all received a full-time warehouse job when they finished. In 2019, we are investing more resources to expand this program for Advanced Manufacturing jobs. We need to get people in Broome County off the unemployment line and into the workforce.

Over in the Department of Social Services, I am creating a brand-new program, Clean Sweep. A job coach is funded in my budget to help DSS recipients who can work, get to work. This program will give people the skills and experience they need to get a full-time job.

Also new for next year, there will be a new partnership between Workforce Development and our District Attorney. I am funding a brand-new diversion program created by the District Attorney Cornwell. The DA will be announcing more on this new program with Sara Liu later this year. In 2019, if you can work, you will work.

Workforce Development and jobs also go hand-in-hand with tourism. We need to attract new people to Broome County to help fill those 4,000 open jobs. Last year, the total economic impact of tourism in Broome County was \$494 million. It is growing every year and I want it to get even bigger.

Tonight, I am announcing that I am increasing funding to the Chamber of Commerce. This money will allow Visit Binghamton to hire a full-time team member to focus on bringing more events to Broome County and more visitors to Broome County. Booking more conventions. Creating more overnight hotel packages. Launching a brand new Welcome Wagon program. I spoke with an engineering company recently. They have 10 open engineering jobs they can't fill. Why? Because people are taking jobs elsewhere. When people come to Broome County for a job interview, we need to welcome them and show them everything Broome County has to offer. That's what this new Welcome Wagon program will do, help our employers get the candidates they want to accept those positions and fill those open jobs. I know that this increased investment in the Chamber and Visit Binghamton will pay off because of that.

When people are talking about Broome County, whether it be the people who live here, or the people looking to live here or visiting, I want them to say Broome County is safe and healthy. We need healthy housing. We invest hundreds of thousands of dollars in the Land Bank every year to demolish properties and clean up Broome County. But, I want to take that a step further.

The Department of Social Services is the biggest county department in the budget. In rental assistance alone, the county spends \$12 million dollars every year. \$12 million dollars. We need to make sure that when we are paying rental assistance for DSS recipients, those properties they are living in are safe.

I am announcing tonight that I am creating a first of its kind, Safe Housing Task Force. This Task Force will bring together all the stakeholders in Broome County to develop plans to clean up the quality of our apartments throughout our community. I will be making a formal announcement next week.

What I hand to the Legislature tonight is a tax cut, brand new workforce development initiatives. Increasing funding to public safety, a balanced budget that protects our taxpayers, supports our county departments and our municipalities. The budget protects the health and safety of our residents. I look forward to working with the Legislature, answering questions, being open and transparent and adopting this budget to protect our taxpayers. This plan I present to you tonight takes action to continue to move Broome County in the right direction. Thank you and God Bless.